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SUBJECT: GHANA POLITICAL ROUNDUP

REF: (A) Accra 383, (B) Accra 422

¶1. SUMMARY: Speculation continues in Ghana over possible running-mates for opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) flag bearer Professor John Atta Mills, with former First Lady Nana Rawlings publicly urging Mills to select a female candidate. With the continuing crisis over Liberian refugees, Ghana's Interior Minister Kwamena Bartels called recent demonstrations by Liberian refugees in Ghana a security threat, and said Ghana is working with the UN to organize their repatriation to Liberia. Supporters of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and NDC nearly clashed at meeting with the Chief Imam. In the Northern Region, members of the Royal Andani family have called on President Kufuor to arrest and prosecute the killers of the late Ya Na and forty others before he exits office. The NPP and NDC have also disclosed plans to deploy 270,000 polling agents throughout Ghana in the upcoming December elections. END SUMMARY.

Professor Mills under pressure to select a running mate

¶2. In the wake of reports (subsequently denied by Mills) that NDC flagbearer John Atta Mills had selected MP John Mahama as his running mate, several NDC leaders, including former first lady Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, are urging Mills to name Betty Mould-Iddrisu as his running mate. Last Monday women from the NDC and the 31st December Women's Movement marched on Mills' office in support of Iddrisu. Iddrisu is an ethnic Ashanti, a career lawyer and wife of a former Minister of Defense, Alhaji Iddrisu Mahama, who contested Mills at the party's primary in 2006.

¶3. Mrs. Rawlings publicly voiced concern about the rumored choice of Mahama, claiming it was unfair and potentially unsafe for the NDC. She commented that Mills can only nominate a vice presidential candidate and that the council of Elders and the National Executive Committee must approve the choice.

Liberian refugees a threat to Ghana's security?

¶4. Commenting on unrest at the Buduburam Refugee Camp, which hosts approximately 40,000 Liberian refugees, on April 1 Interior Minister, Kwamena Bartels said that the "demonstration by women and children was part of a wider plot by a number of persons to cause mayhem on the settlement as well as threaten the security of the country." He claimed that ex-combatants in Liberia's decade old civil war have infiltrated Buduburam Refugee camp and are planning to cause trouble in Ghana. The GOG also announced plans to return all the refugees to Liberia, and Bartels said the GOG is working with UNHCR to organize the repatriations. (Reftels)

NPP-NDC supporters engaged in confrontation

¶5. On March 28, rival supporters of the NPP and NDC presidential candidates Nana Akuffo Addo and Prof. Atta Mills sparred after the candidates paid courtesy calls on the National Chief Imam, Shaykh Nuhu Sharubutu at his Accra residence. The clash was due to the

almost simultaneous scheduling of courtesy calls by the two flagbearers with the Chief Imam. The candidates were paying respect to the Chief Imam on the eve of Prophet Mohammed's birthday. Although there were no physical struggles, supporters of the two leaders reportedly used invectives and abusive language against each other.

Andanis demand arrest of killers of Ya Na, others

¶ 16. In Ghana's Northern Region, the Andani family has called on President Kufuor to use his remaining time in office to fulfill his promise of arresting and prosecuting the killers of the late Ya Na and forty other members of the family who perished with him. The proclamation was issued after a grand family meeting to mark the 6th anniversary of the murder of the Ya Na, the overlord of Dagbon.

¶ 17. Members of the family expressed disappointment over the way the criminal and traditional issues in the conflict have been handled by President Kufuor. The five-point communique also called on the Otumfuo Committee to abandon its proposal to allow the funeral of late Ya Na Mahamadu Abdulai to be performed at the Gbewaa palace. The Andanis claimed the proposal had no customary precedence and advised the GOG against supporting the Abudu family to occupy the old Gbewaa palace, saying this would be tantamount to a declaration of war on the Andanis by the Abudos.

NPP youths in Tamale seize party cars

¶ 18. In an effort to emphasize that party leaders should not use public resources for private purposes, a group of NPP youths in Tamale, calling itself the 'Kandahar Group,' has impounded party vehicles. The leader of the Kandahar Group, Mohammed Alhassan, said

ACCRA 00000476 002 OF 002

that party executives are using party vehicles for personal business.

NPP, NDC to deploy 270,000 polling agents in December

¶ 19. In preparing for the December presidential and parliamentary elections, the NPP and the NDC have affirmed they will provide agents in all 22,000 polling stations. The two major parties intend to train 150,000 and 120,000 election monitoring agents, respectively, for the December elections. While acknowledging that it was the party's responsibility to put its agents at polling stations, they appealed to the Electoral Commission (EC) to provide financial assistance.

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